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way that is seldom realized. We have chosen a God to worship without knowing how jealous He would be, or how exacting of the spirit which consecrates institutions to high purposes. Whether the ultimate results will be good or evil, the future alone can decide.

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RELATIVITY AND FINALITY IN ETHICS.

The moral teacher constantly faces a strong and persistent craving on the part of persons of all classes and of every range of intelligence for some final and absolute authority in the field of conduct. Even where in concrete cases such persons do not easily surrender their own judgments, yet in the abstract they demand the feeling that in the background there are sharply defined laws, and final and authoritative voices to insure them in time of need against errors and mistakes amidst the moral difficulties all vividly anticipate as our possible lot.

Nor is it a sufficient reason for this longing to emphasize the grave issues which are, no doubt, at stake. It is not simply as the sick man demands expert medical aid. What is demanded is not competent advice, but an abstract infallibility somewhere. The ethically confused man seeks advice, but advice is not what the average man longs for; he hungers for abstract infallibility behind the advice. The opportunity for medical quackery is small compared to the field for ethical quackery.

The sense that our moral decisions must be made rapidly, almost instinctively; that in many cases to hesitate is to be lost; may make the longing for a final and sure guide strong, but it does not explain the soul's demand for this abstract infallibility. We all at times become weary in the midst of the

moral and intellectual struggle in which the world is engaged, and long for stronger ones to lean upon. This is part of our immaturity and weakness. The surprising fact is, however, that many who have contentedly accepted the doctrine of relativity in all other spheres of knowledge, even in that of religious knowledge, are still strongly insistent on the possibility of and necessity for an absolute and infallible guide in the field of conduct. When in the ranks of an immature Protestantism the question is raised as to the infallibility of organization, creed or book, it is the ethical losses that are most dreaded as a result of the dethronement of the infallible authority. Men who no longer need or defend an infallible theology still insist that in the region of morals we dare not trust to the living inspirations of each struggling generation, but that we imperatively need some outward and absolute authority to which in the last analysis we can successfully appeal.

The doctrine of relativity in morals is distasteful in quarters where one might least expect such hostility. The assurance that the human mind, if only it be sincere enough and earnest enough, can in all concrete cases easily discover the right course of action is widespread and deep-rooted. Yet in the personal experience of every honest student of his own moral life it only needs a moment's reflection to realize that this is not the case. In no field of human inquiry is the honest truth-seeker confronted by more complicated conditions. Nowhere is the relative character of our knowledge more pronounced than just in the sphere of conduct. Whether it will or no, each generation must re-enact its own ten commandments.

The philosophy of Kant is a splendid struggle with dogmatism and skepticism, but the weakness of the ethical contributions is the persistent attempt to escape from the inevitable logic of the system, and to find, in fact, some ground beyond the reach of criticism upon which to build an ethical concept of duty both absolute and unconditioned in its demands. It is just this hunger for a really abandoned Absolute in the sphere of conduct that makes Kant's ethics the most unsatisfactory part of his great work. Kant is himself respon-

sible for the failure on the part of many of his followers to fully recognize the purely formal and empty character of the categorical imperative.

In the development of an empiric personal code of morals we may perhaps find the reason for the historical hunger for an outward and absolute finality in the guidance of conduct. Disclaiming at once any pretence that the theory of development gives us any light upon the origin of morality as an admitted variation, we yet see plainly that the moment a dim sense of "oughtness" is awakened in a group, such a variation from the unmoral must prove favorable and must persist. To call these arising senses of "oughtness" innate ideas no more explains them than the tracing them to the conflict of unmoral instincts. How out of the unmoral should arise the moral, we confess, remains an unsolved riddle. None of the catchwords of the biological laboratory have thrown as yet any light upon that question.

That, however, every empiric morality is a social product needs no argument. And in the family group there is forced upon the young a morality which the parents have more or less vaguely found efficient for their life purposes. In the lower ranges of life, what we call instincts or inherited memories play the part of guarding the young life, and so far as we can know are unmoral, but as the situation becomes more and more complicated the young animal is relatively more helpless, and parental care, as John Fiske and others have pointed out, becomes more and more important. It is at this stage that the social usefulness of courses of conduct being forced upon the immature, not as "useful" or "agreeable," but as "right," becomes apparent. This must occur on the basis of the parental authority. And the parental authority is in the last analysis based upon the relative physical, intellectual and moral superiority of the adult over the young. This social usefulness consists not simply in the fact that those who honored father and mother lived long in the land, and those that did not were eaten by animals in whose way they wantonly wandered, but also in the fact that moral life was deepened and the basis broadened upon which ethical humanity was to build.

The empiric morality of a child is forced upon it by the parental group from heterogeneous motives. For the most part the arguments are from expediency, so far as the empiric morality is rationalized at all. But the awakening moral sense distinguishes between courses of conduct that are "right" because commanded, and only so, and courses of conduct that are understood as agreeable or wise. Again the social usefulness of obedience on the part of the immature to categorical commands is obvious. A dozen times a foolish hen may call the chickens under her wing without good and sufficient reason, but if any chick in superior wisdom notes the uselessness of the call and systematically disobeys, it will probably be the hawk's first victim. For even the most foolish adult supervision of young life is more effective for its preservation than the inexperience of the young can be.

The child that is, therefore, being slowly moralized is constantly being drilled in obedience to unrationalized categorical imperatives on the basis of authority; and this must be the case even at the risk of some strange ethical confusions in the process. Hence at the very beginning of the moral process an authority, outward and visible, and in a sense quite absolute, is linked with the decisions of the gradually developing moral agent. There is, therefore, generally a distinct and dangerous shock where the boy or girl awakes to the fact that father and mother are not infallible, and long after the intellectual limitations may have been more or less consciously realized, the ethical absoluteness of the parental guidance may remain unshaken. Hence linked with the moral life and its needs remain for long after the memories of and longings for an authority practically final and infallible.

In the same way the social usefulness of a group morality leaving its impress upon every member of the group determines the life duration of the group. Favorable variations in a group morality are never at the beginning rationalized. They tend to prolong the group life and to strengthen the association, and hence the group insists upon stamping its morality on each member with all the force of an imperfectly rationalized categorical imperative. The unquestioning obedience of a war-

like tribe to the chief, even if the leadership be inferior and unfortunate, may and likely will give the group great advantages over any less united group, however superior in other respects. The katabolic tendency of the rationalistic analysis is more or less distinctly understood by every leader in a group life. It in fact requires great faith to look beyond the temporary weaknesses of free discussion to the ultimate advantages of a more spontaneous and intelligent acquiescence. Again and again has a relatively stupid conservative reaction defeated intelligent radicalism because of the inherent weakness of a party of action that has all generals and no soldiers.

Here again all the social imperatives are in their genesis linked with an outward and a visible sign of social authority. The group in the way of being moralized becomes accustomed in that very process to leaning upon an ultimate and final authority. The strongest expression of this is in the phrase, "The king can do no wrong"; and the most recent expression is the proclamation of the infallibility of the Pope in the sphere of morals and religion when speaking in an official capacity. The very essence of primitive morality is this sense of being bound to sacred but entirely unrationalized obligations. The finality of duty's claim is linked with confidence in the infallibility of the decisions of some outward authority. Socially, in fact, the weakening by intellectual analysis of confidence in this infallibility has ever been one of the causes of political disruption. From the standpoint of the existing order, whether political or ecclesiastical, the very attitude of asking questions involving doubt about the existing authority is dangerous. The practical, cautious mind may court all suggestions with regard to "reform," but it feels "society must not be overthrown"; the same mind may welcome all suggestions for correcting ecclesiastical defects and failures, but certain undefined fundamentals "must not be touched." The social usefulness of these transcendental abstractions, "society" and "fundamentals," lies exactly in their vagueness. Not even the court-dazzled eyes of King Charles I's pulpit defenders could fail to see that the King was personally an unscrupulous and unclean liar. For them it was not the man Charles Stuart, but

the royal abstraction, that could do no wrong. Just so no intelligent Roman Catholic maintains that the kindly but human Cardinal of Venice becomes personally infallible. The infallible Pope is a symbolic abstraction that corresponds to the categorical imperative, and is for practical purposes as formal and as empty, for in all concrete cases the *ex cathedra* utterances are and always can be explained away. But these abstractions hover as symbols over conduct, giving a measure of authority to each ethical demand.

The question is then at once raised whether any such abstraction is really necessary to enforce our moral obligations. May we not think of the rationalization of conduct proceeding to a point where not only all symbols, but all imperatives and all morality, as we now use the term, would cease. The prudence of Bentham, or a proper recognition of life's values, might then, supposedly, take the place of all moral imperatives as springs for conduct. In that case the idea of duty would give way to enlightened, rationalized self-interest or to an intelligent and far-seeing estimate of the world's real values. With any one who thinks thus, or thinks he thinks thus, no arguments will probably have any weight. It is, in fact, possible to theoretically construct a world thus managed, as it is possible to construct a world without any place for moral freedom. Whether such a world corresponds to the actual facts of our moral experiences is another question.

The really important point is, however, a practical one—does the variation which we describe by the “sense of oughtness,” and which in other words we call duty, play now and is it destined to play indefinitely an important role in the uplift of human life? And if this is so, the present question is forced upon us—how shall we find amid our intellectual limitations a source, if not of absoluteness, yet at least for the individual of finality? The real emptiness of all formal and transcendental categorical imperatives and the unreality of all pretending infallibility are dawning on a slowly maturing race; and with exactly the same katabolic effect upon existing moralities that the youth's discovery of parental limitations signifies for his

conduct. That the responsible leaders in church and state have reason for anxiety with regard to the effect of this moral shock it is folly to deny.

The present need for the sense of oughtness and the farther question whether that need will be permanent may seem capable of separation. It is possible to think of the sense of duty as being simply a useful, socially necessary illusion at least until intelligence takes the place of the illusion. But in point of fact the two questions cannot be separated. If the sense of duty is an illusion, the mask will be forced off by the picked few long before the intelligence required by Bentham or any estimate of values needed by a model society can fully operate. The leaders of thought and action in church and state who have any sense of responsibility for the future are bound to fearlessly face an existing situation.

That, however, a sense of "oughtness," an immediate and impelling sense of duty, must ever exercise its wholesome influence over the race seems implied in the very fact that the interests of the group and those of the individual never do and never can absolutely coincide. It is a useless assumption to say that the mother's ego is simply extended in the child, and that therefore self-interest will dictate care for the future race. On a certain plane of intelligence the unmoralized woman knows that the child is not and cannot be an extension of her pleasure-seeking ego; and she, from her standpoint rationally, refuses the obligations of motherhood. Nor can any presentation of more perfect values affect the situation. As between social and personal values she rationally chooses the personal. She will refuse in the interests of the preservation of such an abstraction as the group's future life to be dictated to by social illusions as to her personal values. She will rationally be guided by her own estimate of values. The future of the associated life can never rationally outweigh the immediate personal interests of a member of the group, particularly if those interests are indefinite and undefinable. At the same time where in some form the interests of the future group are not cared for, disaster is sure to follow.

It is at this point that hitherto symbols of an abstract authority, infallible and final, have been socially useful. And now as these symbols fade there becomes more and more necessary the insistence on a sense of duty apart from all prudential personal considerations.

For any one who considers the group life of importance and who desires its prolongation and its development—again a purely personal judgment of value; it is open to any one to deny the importance of such prolongation—but granted such a desire, and it will have to be insisted upon that a main fact will be the cultivation for the group life of this sense of “oughtness.” There is no use in counting upon fictions of infallible authorities giving much longer any support to the inspiration of duty, nor can we ever hope to rationalize completely these imperatives.

The social function of this sense of “oughtness” is not a matter of abstruse speculation, nor an ethical assumption; it is a matter of every-day observation. In a community where the moral sense is developed we find order and persistence, fullness of life and capacity for resisting destructive forces of every sort. Every historian notes the influence; and even the perils and evils attendant upon the fiction of an infallible authority have been outweighed by the temporary support such fictions have given to the imperfectly moralized community in its search after ideals.

The careful separation and the cultivation of a profound sense of duty, apart from all outward infallible authority, becomes one of the chief duties resting upon the moral educator. In answer to the inevitable question, what takes the place of the infallible authority, there can be but one reply. We are here, as everywhere else, entirely dependent upon our experience. The sense of “oughtness” gives us no light upon *what is our duty*, but only tells us that our duty *must be done*. To do our duty we must be at pains, with often sorrow and labor, to find it out. Nor can we confine ourselves to the sphere of rationalized experience. We are as thinking beings bound to rationalize our experience as far as it is possible, yet at the same time ethical development will often, if not

generally, outpace our rationalizing process. John Stuart Mill was ethically at his best when he declared himself ready to forgo an eternity of happiness rather than betray his intellectual manhood. At the same time, from his own standpoint, such a course would be highly irrational.

So long as the group interests do not seem to the individual to coincide with his and so long as in setting up a standard of values there is room for the conflict between social and individual standards, so long must profound but often unrationalized race impulses guide the really moral man. He feels himself impelled to do what "seems to him right," even though he may have to confess that intellectually he may of course be mistaken. Our rationalized moral experiences become often only our platform for farther advance along the lines of moral improvement. We are moved by profound sense of duty, even while freely confessing our limitations in discovering what duty is. Often we must depend on unreasoned but deep-seated impulses for our guidance, not that these impulses are by any means more trustworthy than our reasoned processes; they are often less so; but it is often perilous to our best and deepest self to be deaf to such voices.

Luther may have been irrational before the council of Charles V, and Calvin was, no doubt, mistaken in his course toward Servetus. But the race is probably ethically stronger to-day because those men were true at great cost to what rightly or wrongly they believed to be their higher manhood.

It has probably often been, and will often be again, of more importance to the group life that the sense of imperative obligation be cultivated in its members by obedience to its sternest commands, than even that these demands be in every case rationally defensible.

Not that a race coming slowly to intellectual maturity is not bound as far as is possible to rationalize its empiric morality. This is just the field for a really scientific ethics. Impulsive morality must become the morality of intelligent conviction, often passing out of the field of moral contest as it is thus rationalized. So fields that were once the battleground for the moral man's ethical struggles become the peaceful re-

gions of an automatic obedience to the demands of the higher life. Indeed, the hope of the race is the fact that the ethical triumphs of one generation or of individuals in the past become the undisputed possession of succeeding generations.

Historically no force has been more efficient in impressing men with the tremendous value of this obedience to duty than that of religion, using the term as it is used by Höffding, and defining it as "faith in the permanence of the world's values." Nor will it probably ever cease to play this part. For this reason it is all the more unfortunate when dogmatic forms of religion substitute for this faith tentative and temporary formulations of those values, or stake themselves and their authority on the maintenance of alleged infallible authorities, however venerable or valuable. To the question, are we under moral obligation and have our ethical values any reality, religion in the broadest sense should always have an answer prompt and ready. To the question, what courses of conduct most conduce to the social and individual welfare, only a rationalized experience can give any lasting and communicable light. And the two questions are separate. It is one thing to ask what courses of conduct *are* socially useful, and another to ask, should I seek at personal expense the socially useful. The moralized man feels the finality of the answer to the last inquiry. He acknowledges himself bound by categorical imperatives "to do right," and the more earnestly and honestly he feels the force of the imperative, the more profoundly alive is he likely to be to the tremendous difficulty of the task set him in discovering just what the right course for him is. The shallow man may render "blind" obedience to external conventional forms; the lazy man may gladly accept a conventional morality on the basis of some alleged infallible authority; the earnest moral man feels he must fight for each new glimpse of moral obligation. Thus it comes about that forms of religion which arrest inquiry by substituting an alleged infallibility for personal effort act as ethical soporifics, and check the very moral enthusiasm and inquiry which it is their chief business to enkindle. The man who fondly dreams that in Pope or Church or Bible or creed he has an answer ready

at hand to all ethical problems will be in grave danger of not taking much pains to discover just what those problems are. The moral conventions of his day he assumes have all the countenance of his infallibility, and he attributes to them the sacredness he connects with his infallible guide.

The only hope, therefore, for the ethical future of the race is the careful insistence, on the one hand, on the finality of our moral obligation, and on the other on the relativity of our ethical knowledge.

This finality is symbolized in nearly all political and ecclesiastical systems by some person, book or constitution, and in most systems of philosophy by some theory of authority resting upon "innate ideas" or a "categorical imperative." So long as the purely formal character of these symbols is recognized they do no harm. But the moment that the symbol is identified with an ethical content, so far as that identification is made effective, it must work injury.

One of the especial dangers it entails is the loss of all ethical perspective. Nothing is more obvious to the morally struggling man than that some decisions are made under a moral impulse that leaves no room for hesitation or doubt; while in other cases the gravest indecision is his painful experience. This struggle is one of the powerfully educating factors in our ethical advance. When, then, a pretended infallible authority is interposed, this struggle is too apt to be transformed into a mere casuistry, a simple intellectual determination of the letter of the authority. The whole educative significance of the ethical struggle is really endangered, and moral deterioration sets in. Our moral advancement, both personal and social, depends upon our honest struggle to solve the problems about us, and to do this under a high sense of the moral risks involved.

To the moral man, then, who stand firmly on the ground of our moral obligation, while at the same time freely recognizing the relativity of our ethical knowledge, there remains the duty of bringing these together in an ideal which is an advancing one, but for him embodies final obligation until

a better ideal takes its place. The moral man rejoices to render implicit obedience to this ideal, and he recognizes that in it are included all his relations to life.

We sadly realize from year to year and from generation to generation how imperfect have been our ideals; at the same time it probably means more for the race that the moral agent should form his own imperfect ideals with the help of the past, and with toil and pain and tears, than that he should accept ready-made an ethical system, no matter how exalted, and obey it slavishly and mechanically.

Our moral life is thus a tremendous venture of faith in the ultimate outcome of obedience to ideals, confessedly imperfect; an emphatic insistence on the solemn and final character of the categorical imperatives of even the ill-informed conscience of the individual.

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THE TOLERATION OF ERROR.

Any one interested in watching the intellectual life of our day and in comparing it with that of the past, is likely to notice that a subtle but very real change has gradually taken place in the mental attitude of civilized and educated men toward such opinions and dogmas as they believe to be erroneous. This may in brief be said to consist in a readiness to give all ideas alike, good and bad, true and false, helpful and hurtful, as they may appear, a "fair chance," an opportunity to hold their own if they can in that struggle for existence which is as ceaseless among ideas as among animals and plants. Whether this broader toleration extended to error, real or supposed, is to be considered a wholesome sign of the times must depend on what such toleration means; if it is, as some earnest